



Blackmail Is Easy



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Chapter 1 by Luke Meyers

Blackmail is easy when you understand people. All you have to do is find somebody who's forgotten what they're afraid of, and remind them. Once you've done that, it's all yours for the taking.

I fanned the photos in front of him, and watched his features. His eyes widened, nostrils flared. His breathing took on a panic, as his eyes flicked to me in desperation. I gave him no solace.

"Nobody else has to see these, Hank. All I need is one little favor, and this all goes away." I made a little "disappearing smoke" gesture with my fingers. It's a cliché, but I know what helps close the deal.

Hank Smuthers breathed a deep sigh and cast his eyes down. He was broken. "Alright. Alright. Tell me what you want."

Chapter 2 by Selena Raynee



He listened silently, but exclaimed right after I stopped talking:

"You're mad!"

"Hank - "

"I - I can't do this!"

"Hank"

"Don't make me!"

"HANK," I half-rose from my seat. "I know you can manage it, it would cost you less than certain

documents brought to public attention"

He sighed and turned meek again

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"Alright, I'll do it"

"Been a pleasure seeing y

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fulfill my request

he needed to think how to

I went to bed with uplifted spirits: soon, yes, soon I'll have what I want. I had the most pleasurable dreams up to the point when a loud bang jerked me back to reality. Someone was in my room. When I realized it, someone put something over my head, a pair of strong hands carried me somewhere. I tried to scream, but my voice would come out muffled and weak. Indefinite time passed and I found myself in a dark room, the only illuminated spot was a chair where I sat. Something was binding me.

A figure seemed to move in the darkness and I heard my name being spoken in a sinister way.

Chapter 3 by intellikat



"Jessie."

My hood was lifted and a dark-skinned man sat before me, fanning a deck of cards in front of me. My eyes widened, and my nostrils flared. My pulse raced as my eyes flicked to the man in desperation.

"Nobody else has to know about this, Jessie. We'll just play one full game and then it all ends." He made a little "curtains closing" gesture with his hands, which honestly was quite effective and I made a mental note to remember just such an action were I to need it in the future.

I breathed a deep sigh and put my hands on the table. "Alright. Alright. Strip poker, is it?"

Chapter 4 by intellikat



"No..." The man looked confused. "Not strip poker. FLAY poker." He placed a shiny filet knife on the table in front of us.

Chapter 5 by Ian



The man dealt out five cards each and used the filet knife to release my right hand so I could pick up my cards.

"I suppose a bridge four some is out of the question?" I ventured, playing for time. Whoever this guy is, he is either very lucky, or I am now that I am left handed.

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"The only four party game I can think of is strip poker," he said without any great emotion. "Let's play."

What, aside from the razor-sharp knife and our recent history was it about this man that was so disturbing?

He was wearing a black suit over a black polo neck and a calm, but determined look, not unlike Steve Jobs launching an iPhone. Nothing strange about that here in the Valley where everyone wants to be Steve.

His hands were smooth so he clearly didn't usually do his own dirty work. Hold on. Oh-ho-hooo. Well that IS interesting.

No shadow. Either Peter Pan grew up in a surprising way, or this feller was not of this earth.

Chapter 6 by Christopher Kropp



Little did I know I simply could not see his shadow as the room was dark and his shadow was hidden behind him.

I was unlucky in my play this leading to the skin above my pointer finger to be slit with the knife and pulled about a quarter of an inch. This caused me to lurch backwards, skinning my finger back to the second knuckle. The man let go so that I fell back. I knew that I had to focus on the game if I were to get out of this alive. If only I knew how to count cards.

I won the next round, to my surprise the man slit his finger and pulled it back a quarter inch. He stared deep into my eyes as he did this, not flinching in the slightest.

Chapter 7 by Free



I was satisfied with my rational explanation for the man's lack of shadow until I realized the man was between the light and me. Shouldn't I be able to see his shadow? When this awareness set in, my suspicions of the man's origins returned.

As the man set the filet knife on the table and leaned back in his chair, his gaze slipping from my eyes to his cards, I kept my own eyes on the table. In the light of the lamp that illuminated our

section of the room, the shadow of the knife had shrunk beneath the knife's body as he lowered it to the table's surface. Even then, I was mirroring the edge of the knife.

What I had seen of the man's shadow was not a shadow at all. In shadow, the knife may as well have hovered. The man's dark arm cast no shade.

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No shadow.

It was undeniable. The man had Neverland Syndrome.

I darted my eyes to the man's face and dropped them to my lap, thinking fast as his unwrinkled hands tapped the cards into a neat pile and dealt the next round.

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